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## **Salisbury Transit System to Offer Free Bus Rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days Beginning June 1**

### ***Municipal Agreement with NCDOT to Provide Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funding Support of Complimentary Fares***

Salisbury, NC \_May 31, 2007 – The City of Salisbury's Transit Division announces that it will offer free city bus rides on Orange and Red Ozone Action Days beginning Friday, June 1 and continuing through Saturday, September 29. The designated span falls within the NC Division of Air Quality's specified ozone "season". A municipal agreement between the City and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) provides financial support through the Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) Project. The grant will assist to improve customer service, market the transit system, enhance health awareness, and improve air quality by encouraging drivers to utilize the public transit system.

City of Salisbury Transit Division Manager Rodney Harrison states, "We are truly grateful for the CMAQ funding support and Salisbury is proud to do our part in improving the air quality at the local level. The free ride program provides the opportunity to highlight the value of our bus service and allow first time riders the opportunity to experience the transit system at no charge." The Salisbury Transit system prides itself on promptness and travels to numerous major shopping destinations throughout the city including the Salisbury Mall, Wal-Mart, Innes Street Market, Magic Mart, K-Mart and the Ketner Center. In addition, the bus system travels to Rowan Cabarrus Community College, Livingstone College and within blocks of Catawba College. The Employment Security Commission, Post Office, Health Department, Rowan Regional Medical Center, V.A. Hospital and the Department of Social Services, are included within the Transit system's normal daily route. Frequent bus stops throughout Downtown Salisbury offer a one block walking distance from the City Square. In addition, City bus routes include destinations in Spencer and East Spencer.

The current rate for bus riders is 1.00 for regular fares with senior citizens and handicapped riders at 50 cents per person. Transfers and children under the age of five are free. Riders may board and disembark from any designated bus stop throughout the City or at the Salisbury Transfer site on Depot Street, located adjacent to the Amtrak Train Station. City buses arrive and depart from the transfer site daily at 15 minutes before and 15 minutes after the hour. Bus service is available Monday through Friday

from 6:15 am to 6:45 pm and on Saturday from 8:45 am to 4:15 pm. City buses are non-operational on Sunday.

By 5 p.m. each day, the Transit Division receives the local air quality and ozone level report forecast for the following day. If the local forecast predicts an orange or red ozone action day, the free ride program will be initiated. Potential riders may call the Transit Hotline at 704-216-7537 after 7 pm each day to receive an updated ozone status report for the next day. In addition, Government ACCESS Channel 16 and the City's website, [www.salisburync.gov](http://www.salisburync.gov), will also offer daily updated status reports.

A marketing campaign, designed to assist in creating awareness for air quality and the City's complimentary bus fare promotion, encourages citizens to "Help clear the air...with FREE Bus Fare!" The slogan alludes to precautions issued with respect to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Air Quality Index. Ozone is the main ingredient of urban smog and can be hazardous to your health. Even at low levels, ozone can cause a number of respiratory effects, especially in sensitive individuals such as young children, the elderly or those with asthma and breathing difficulties. Ground level ozone concentrations are more likely to exceed safe health levels on very hot days with little or no wind and temperatures in the 90 degrees and above range. Harrison explains that the majority of high ozone concentrations usually occur between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m. and that stagnant air masses, occurring in late summer, can trap and hold ozone near the surface. "Posters, flyers, maps and banners are currently being distributed throughout the City, Harrison shares and "citizens may visit City Hall, the City Office Building and our Parks & Recreation Centers for detailed maps outlining transit destinations and arrival and departure times. We encourage our citizens to take advantage of the free ride program and leave the driving to us." Pertinent Salisbury Transit information may be obtained online by visiting [www.salisburync.gov/transit](http://www.salisburync.gov/transit).

A January 2007 release issued by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) in Washington, DC, shares the results of a groundbreaking new study which found "that public transportation use saves 1.4 billion gallons of gasoline every year and can reduce household expenses by \$6,200." The article shares the response of APTA President William W. Millar regarding the study findings. "Public Transportation provides Americans with greater freedom, access, opportunity and choice. Ridership is up over 25 percent since 1995, because Americans knew instinctively that it saves money and gasoline. Now we know exactly how much." For more information regarding the reduction of U.S. gasoline consumption through public transportation and to review the article above in greater detail, please visit the Public Transportation website at [www.publictransportation.org/news/features/070109\\_energy\\_report.asp](http://www.publictransportation.org/news/features/070109_energy_report.asp), accessible through the World Wide Web.

For more information regarding the City of Salisbury's "Help clear the air...with FREE Bus Fare" initiative, please contact Rodney Harrison at 704-638-5253. The City of Salisbury is an equal employment opportunity employer with over 180 different job classifications and 400 full time positions. For more information regarding the City of Salisbury and its services and departments, please visit us on the World Wide Web at [www.salisburync.gov](http://www.salisburync.gov).

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